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The U.S. Navy in the Pacific:

Past, Present, and Glimpses of the Future

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INTRODUCTION

It is one thing to observe the changes that have taken place over the last ten years in the size and character of the U.S. military presence in East Asia and the Western Pacific. It is quite another to forecast the nature of that presence ten years from now. One is, of course, tempted simply to extrapolate the past into the future.

Some succumb to that temptation. They look at the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam and Thailand. They look at the reduction in the strength of the U.S. forces that remain in Korea and the Western Pacific. They look at the refocusing of U.S. security concerns on Europe. And based on what they see they conclude that the United States is retreating from Asia.

But simple extrapolation often misleads; and it clearly does so in this case. One reason is obvious: in concentrating on change one tends to neglect stability, and in certain fundamental respects the U.S. military presence in the Asian-Pacific region hasn't changed at all. There is another, less obvious but in the long run more important reason as well: the processes that brought about the changes that have taken place in that presence over of the last ten years, and those likely to produce change during the next ten years, are quite different.

Ten years ago the U.S. Pacific Command had far more men, ships, and aircraft than it has today. But ten years ago the United States was fighting a high-intensity war in Southeast Asia,

and the Pacific Command's requirements for men and materiel (tactical air and ground forces in particular) were understandably very large. Today the United States is no longer at war and those requirements have been revised accordingly. Pacific Command's efforts are now concentrated on maintaining stability in Northeast Asia. It must also be prepared to conduct crisis-management operations in the Indian Ocean -- most importantly, to insure the continued flow of oil from the Persian Gulf to the United States and its allies in both Europe and Asia. A different set of forces is required to carry out these tasks.[1]

This modification both in the use and in the strength and composition of U.S. forces in the Asian-Pacific region reflects more than just the end of the War in Vietnam. Other processes have had an impact as well. One was a fundamental rethinking of the role the United States ought to play in the international arena. A second was a redefinition of the threat posed to the United States, its allies, and its interests in Asia. A third has been an attempt to redress the imbalances that were allowed to develop in Europe while the United States was preoccupied with Vietnam. A fourth, the reduction in the overall strength of the U.S. Navy, will be discussed at some length below.

The magnitude and the origins of the changes that already have taken place in the U.S. posture, the changes that are occurring now in the international environment in Asia and the

Pacific, and the changes that might result from the current U.S. reappraisal of its naval forces all raise legitimate questions regarding the future of the Pacific Command and especially its naval component: the United States Pacific Fleet. The objectives of this discussion are to review and explain the most significant change that has taken place over the last decade in the Pacific Fleet -- the reduction in its strength by more than half -- and on the basis of what is going on now, to outline some of the changes that are and are not likely to be made in the future, especially in that component of the fleet deployed forward in Asian waters.

This concentration on naval forces should not obscure two facts: although probably the most useful (and certainly the most used), the Navy is not the only element of U.S. military power present or employable in Asia; and military forces are not the only instruments available to the United States for the implementation of its foreign policy.[2] Nor, as indicated earlier, should concentration on what has changed obscure the fact that some things -- such as the U.S. commitment to honor its obligations to its allies -- have <u>not</u> changed.

Reappraisal, even revision, of means does not necessarily imply revision of ends.

DETERMINANTS OF THE U.S. POSTURE

Three factors play a major role in determining the strength and composition of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and the character of its deployments in Asian waters. None is completely independent of the others. All are important.

The first factor is the complex of threats perceived to be posed to the United States, its allies and its interests in the region. Now and for the foreseeable future, the Soviet Union can be judged the most important source of such threats.* This has not always been the case, however, and the Soviet Union should not be seen as their only source.[3]

The second factor is the estimated requirement for U.S. forces in the region. This estimate has two components. One is derived from assessments of the ability of allies to defend themselves and their vital interests. The other is derived from identification of the forces necessary for the direct defense of the United States (given a certain strategy for the conduct of that defense), the additional forces necessary to augment allies' defenses (given established policies regarding the nature and extent of such assistance and a certain strategy for providing

*This is not the appropriate point for an extended discussion of threats, either real or perceived. Suffice it to say that, in the opinion of this observer, and in regard to the three values noted (self, allies, interests), the Soviets are the primary source of threat in northeast Asia and the Pacific. That threat is significant. And it is increasing -- albeit gradually.

it), and whatever else may be involved in the protection and promotion of U.S. overseas interests.

The third factor is the actual availability of U.S. forces for use in the region. Availability has three antecedents. One is the size and configuration of the U.S. force structure. Another is competition among requirements for those forces. The last is the priorities according to which those forces are allocated to meet these requirements.

This discussion concentrates on two of those factors: requirements for and availability of forces. Neither is as well or as widely understood as it should be; and understanding the dynamics of both is important. It is especially important when, as in this discussion, one focuses not on a whole (the U.S. Navy) but on one of its parts (a constituent fleet). It is natural to assume that changes in that fleet are linked to developments in its operating environment, and very often that is so. But sometimes it is not.

Some of the changes that have taken place in the Pacific Fleet over the last ten years are direct reflections of specific developments in the region; they would not have taken place had those developments not occurred. Other changes, however, although played out in the Pacific, had their origins elsewhere; they would have taken place regardless of what was going on in the region. Confusing the two can lead to misunderstanding both the intentions behind, and the limits on, such changes.

WHAT HAS CHANGED

There are two quite different and equally valid viewpoints from which to examine what has happened to the U.S. naval posture in the Pacific over the last decade. One is the view from Asia. The other is the view from the United States.

Both focus on the same fact. The U.S. Pacific Fleet has been reduced in strength by more than half. It had 503 ships in 1968; in early 1978 it had 206 (see table 1).

From the Asian perspective, among the first things likely to be noted are the consequences of this reduction. One of the most obvious of these is the reduction in the strength of that portion of the force deployed in the Western Pacific: the U.S. Seventh Fleet. In mid 1968, 178 ships were operating with the Seventh Fleet; in early 1978 only 45 were deployed there (see table 2). The reduction in the size of the Seventh Fleet's immediate backup force -- the remainder of the Pacific Fleet -- is not likely to escape attention either.

From the U.S. perspective, the first thing likely to be noted is the primary cause of the reduction in the strength of the Pacific Fleet: the reduction in the overall size of the U.S. Navy. In 1968, its active general purpose force strength was 932 ships; by early 1978 that number had dropped to 418 (see table 1).

Changes of this magnitude are dramatic under any circumstances. This reduction in the overall strength of the U.S. Navy

TABLE 1: US NAVY GENERAL PURPOSE FORCE
STRENGTH AND DISPOSITION -- 1958, 1968, 1978 (1)(2)

	1958		1968		1978	
	ATLANTIC	PACIFIC	ATLANTIC	PACIFIC	ATLANTIC	PACIFIC
SHIP TYPES						
Aircraft Carriers						
Attack	6*	9	6*	9	7*	6
ASW	6	5	4	4	---	---
Surface Combatants						
Battleship				(1)		
Cruiser	7	9		(13)	11	16
Destroyer	140	104		(240)	34	30
Escort/Frigate	49	37		(59)	32	33
Patrol					2	1
Attack Submarines	74	43		(115)	43	36
Amphibious Warfare Vessels	39	86		(157)	31	32
Mine Warfare Vessels	42	43		(86)	3	---
Auxiliaries	122	124		(247)	49	52
Fleet Totals (General Purpose Forces)	487	463	429	503	212	206
Navy Totals (General Purpose Forces)	901		932		418	

*Includes one unit for pilot training (no active air wing).

(1) Sources:
1958 -- Author's estimates, based on information presented in: James C. Fahey, The Ships and Aircraft of the United States Fleet, 7th Ed., Falls Church, VA.: Ships and Aircraft, 1958.
1968 -- Detailed information on fleet disposition in 1968 is not available. That presented here is extracted from: Department of Defense Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1968, Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1971, pp. 317, 318. Information on overall strength (in parentheses) supplied by the Office of Naval History.
1978 -- "Statement of Admiral James L. Holloway III, USN, Chief of Naval Operations, Concerning the Fiscal Year 1979 Military Posture and Fiscal Year 1979 Budget of the United States Navy," np (Washington, D.C.) processed, nd (1978), p. 73.

(2) Data for 1958 and 1968 are illustrative only. Since the structure of the active fleet changes continuously, as new units are commissioned and old units retired, it is exceedingly difficult to reconstruct the precise composition of the force at any particular point.

TABLE 2: U.S. SEVENTH FLEET GENERAL PURPOSE FORCE STRENGTH -- 1968 AND 1978

	1968[1]	1978[2]
Aircraft Carriers	6*	2**
Cruisers	4	5
Destroyers	40	6
Escorts/Frigates	10	8
Attack Submarines	9	6
Amphibious Warfare Vessels	32	8
Mine Warfare Vessels	13	---
Auxiliaries	64	10
Fleet Total	178	45

*4 CVA, 2 CVS

**2 CV

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[1]As of 15 July 1968. Information supplied by the Office of Naval History.

[2]As of "a representative day," (presumably in early 1978). Extracted from a table describing fleet readiness status in: "Statement of Admiral James L. Holloway III, USN, Chief of Naval Operations, Concerning the Fiscal Year 1979 Military Posture and Fiscal Year 1979 Budget of the United States Navy," np (Washington, D.C.) processed, nd (1978), p. 78. Actually, the forces listed here are depicted in that table only as being assigned to CINCPACFLT, and deployed. Seventh Fleet forces are, however, both.

was especially so. For one thing, it brought an end to an era of relatively high and stable force levels. Fluctuations in the size of the Navy had occurred before, most notably the reduction in strength from the World War II high of 5718 ships to the pre-Korean War low of 647.[4] But after the Korean War there had been only comparatively minor fluctuations around a comparatively high figure: the average active strength of the Navy between 1946 and 1972 was 978 ships.[5] Secondly, in contrast to the immediate post World War II reduction in strength, which was for the most part accomplished by transferring units to the reserve and as a result could be readily reversed, this reduction was accomplished primarily by sending them to the scrap yard.

The differences between these two reductions in overall U.S. naval strength are important. The immediate post World War II cutback was initiated because then existing naval force levels were considered to be in excess of requirements. The reduction in strength in the early 1970s was carried out despite the fact that then existing naval force levels were considered to be <u>below</u> requirements -- because, to put it bluntly, it had to be.[6] A significant fraction of the Navy was reaching the end of its useful life. These ships had been built during or shortly after World War II. Many had been modified subsequently in the attempt to keep pace with developments in sensors and weaponry, but technology was forging ahead and it was not considered cost-effective to attempt to modify them further. They had to be replaced. In or-

down to help pay for their replacements, which clearly were going to be expensive, current costs had to be reduced substantially.* This meant significant numbers of the older, less effective ships in the force had to go. They went.

The ending of the War in Vietnam certainly facilitated this process. So did the redefinition of the threat considered to be posed to the United States, its allies, and its interests in the Asian-Pacific region -- in particular, the recognition of the impact on the region of intensified Sino-Soviet conflict,** the concomitant reduction in the perceived likelihood that the United States would have to fight a major war against the Peoples Republic of China, and the consequent modification in overall U.S. military requirements (from force levels sufficient to fight two and one half to those sufficient to fight one and one half simultaneous wars).

But neither of these developments was the driving factor in the reduction in the strength of the U.S. Navy. Given the resource reallocations brought about by Vietnam, it would have occurred anyway.

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*Ordinarily, resources would have been provided well before such retirements became necessary so this replacement process could proceed in an orderly fashion. In this case, the War in Vietnam had absorbed those resources.

**Perceived as a potential inhibition to aggressive action on the mainland by either party.

The reduction in the overall strength of the U.S. Navy, however, was the driving factor in the reduction in the strength of the Pacific Fleet. And the latter, rather than any U.S. desire to withdraw from Asia, was the cause of the eventual reduction in the strength of its forward deployments to the Western Pacific. U.S. ends had not changed. The Pacific Fleet simply no longer possessed the means to continue steaming as before.

WHAT HAS NOT CHANGED

Two apparent constants stand out against the background of these changes. One is the strength of the U.S. commitment to honor its obligations to its allies. The other is the pattern of disposition and deployment of those naval forces the United States has available. Theoretically, both of these could have changed as well; but they haven't.*

The U.S. commitment to honor its obligations is a matter of principle, not expediency. As such, it applies at all times and in equal measure to each alliance relationship. The current U.S. emphasis on increasing the military capabilities of NATO does not, for instance, imply that the United States considers its obligations to its European allies more important than its obligations to its allies in Asia, only that it considers the current situation in Europe to be more threatening militarily than the current

*Some of those obligations have, however, been modified in treaty renegotiations.

situation in Asia, and hence more in need of attention -- and corrective military action.[7]

Evidence for the consistency of the U.S. commitment can be found in a variety of places, including the geographical disposition of its naval forces. For years, these forces have been divided almost equally (55%-45%) between the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets. Most deviations from this norm are readily explicable.[8] Some reflect technical considerations.* Others reflect operational considerations. The latter are more indicative of U.S. intent. The most significant of these have occurred when the United States was engaged in combat (in Asia) and forces were withdrawn from the fleet that was not fighting (the Atlantic Fleet) to augment the fleet that was (the Pacific Fleet).

During the War in Vietnam, for example, the United States stripped many of the more capable systems from its forces deployed in or earmarked for Europe and sent them to Southeast Asia. When the war ended, it acted to reverse that process and restore the geographical balance.[9] Throughout, its commitment to honor its obligations to its European allies remained unchanged, even though the means it had on hand to do so varied significantly -- as good an indication as any that the strength of U.S. forces

*The major deviation is in strategic forces. Target locations and missile ranges dictate that some 75% of the U.S. ballistic missile submarine force be located in the Atlantic.

immediately available to assist its allies is only, and should not be taken as more than, an imperfect indicator of the strength of this commitment. Means are not ends.

This comment notwithstanding, many hold that a second major feature of U.S. naval policy, the importance accorded the maintenance of substantial forward deployments (the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, the Seventh Fleet in the Western Pacific), does provide additional evidence for the consistency of this commitment.[10] And this view obviously has had a significant effect on U.S. naval practice. Ten years ago, when the U.S. Navy had a much larger force to draw upon for such deployments, maintaining substantial forces forward tended to stretch capabilities uncomfortably. Those forward deployments continue today, despite the fact that with a much smaller force to draw upon they stretch capabilities painfully.*[11] One of the principal reasons why the United States maintains this posture, in spite of the sharply increased costs of doing so, is the apprehension that its allies (and their potential opponents) would interpret a change in its forward deployments as a reflection of a change in its willingness to honor its obligations.[12] And this is one area where the

*Overseas home-porting, like that of the aircraft carrier Midway and other forces in Japan, helps relieve, but does not eliminate, this burden.

United States considers it vital that its intentions not be misunderstood -- i.e., that means not be taken for ends.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Most of the processes that brought about the changes outlined above have run their course. New forces are at work now, and it is these, rather than their predecessors, that will have the greatest impact on the future strength and composition of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, and the character of its deployments in Asian waters. All three of the determinants of the U.S. naval posture in the Pacific identified at the outset of this discussion are involved.

The first of those determinants was the perceived threat to the U.S., its allies, and its interests. Certainly the most immediate threat to these values now and for the foreseeable future is that represented by the combination of the increasing dependence of the industrialized nations on Persian Gulf oil and the obvious fragility of the flow of oil to them from the Gulf -- a fragility that on the one hand already has been demonstrated at the source and on the other hand is inherent along sea lines of communication.[13] A less imminent but potentially far more important threat to these values is that posed by another combination: increasing Soviet naval capabilities in the Pacific and increasing Soviet willingness to employ its forces in peacetime to advance its own state and ideological interests overseas -- especially,

but by no means exclusively, in the Third World.[14] The threat posed by conflicts resulting from increasing competition for control of the resources located in and under the sea is difficult to assess, but cannot be overlooked.[15]

The second determinant was the requirement for U.S. forces. Allied capabilities to defend themselves and their vital interests are increasing, and should continue to do so. However, they are not likely to increase to the point where they offset the principal threats outlined above. Thus the requirement for U.S. forces to augment allied defenses -- particularly those of Japan and Korea -- in time of need can be taken as a given for the foreseeable future. On the other hand, precisely how the United States will render that assistance appears not to be as certain. The strategies that have prevailed until now are being reconsidered, and the outcome of that process is likely to have a significant impact on the composition of Pacific Fleet forces, the stance they adopt in peacetime, and the character of the operations they will undertake in wartime.[16] The fact that the introduction of new weapons and sensors has already increased the combat capabilities of the Soviet navy substantially, and the prospect that it will continue to do so, also will have a significant impact on U.S. requirements.[17]

The third determinant of the U.S. naval posture in the Pacific was the availability of forces. This remains the key to the

future of that posture, but on entirely different grounds now. The decline in overall U.S. Naval strength appears to have ended. Active strength can now be expected to stabilize near its present level and then grow somewhat.* Meanwhile, the capabilities of exiting units are being upgraded significantly as they receive new types of offensive and defensive weapons systems and sensors. HARPOON, the F-14/PHOENIX combination and towed array sonars are good examples of these improvements. To some extent, this increase in unit capability offsets the decline that has taken place in the Navy's numerical strength and at the same time reduces the number of replacement units that must be acquired -- 600 or so of today's units should provide a greater overall capability than the 900 or so of years past. The capabilities of potential opponents have increased as well, however, and, while the "reach" of naval combat systems has increased markedly, the simple fact remains that no ship can be in two places at the same time.

Competing requirements, and priorities for the allocation of forces among those requirements, are likely to play an increasing role in determining the availability of forces for use in the Pacific. Some of this competition is geographical: Asian versus European requirements, the requirement to not only assist in the direct defense of allies in Europe and Asia but insure the flow of

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oil to them from the Persian Gulf. But much of this competition isn't geographical.

Competition among differing peacetime requirements and between peacetime and wartime requirements in the same region is increasing. As noted above, the costs of maintaining substantial forward deployments in peacetime have increased significantly. Some of the direct costs of these deployments can be offset readily; many of the indirect costs cannot, especially where opportunities to employ resources differently have been foregone in order to keep forces forward. One of these opportunity costs is a reduction in the overall combat readiness of the force supporting those deployments. Another is a reduction in the ability of that force to deploy substantial numbers of additional units on short notice for crisis-management operations.[18] As the capabilities of potential opponents increase, raising the threshhold of credibility for the deterrent arrayed against them, the importance of having the flexibility to concentrate larger and more powerful groupings of forces whenever and wherever necessary also increases, and with it the true magnitude of those opportunity costs.

THE FUTURE

It is of course impossible to predict what the future will bring. It <u>is</u> possible, on the other hand, to narrow the range of uncertainty about the future -- to identify things that are not

likely to occur, and say something about the things that are. Or, it is possible to do so provided some understanding of the relevant processes and knowledge of what impels them is available.

Some of both is available in this case, enough to make it possible to avoid drawing the wrong conclusions, but not enough to make it possible to state with certainty what will happen. On the one hand, decisions crucial to the future of the U.S. Navy as a whole and by extension the future of the Pacific Fleet have yet to be made. On the other hand, not all the consequences of those decisions that already have been made are readily predictable. These decisions must first be transformed into policies, and those policies put into practice, before their results can be known with any confidence.

What follows is an attempt to outline three areas in which change in the U.S. naval posture in the Pacific is conceivable, the conditions under which such changes might occur, and the likelihood that they will in fact take place. One such area concerns the composition of the fleet and reflects the current U.S. reappraisal of the utility of naval forces. The second has to do with the role of the Pacific Fleet in conflicts outside the Pacific. The third deals with forward deployments and the problems of meeting Allied expectations.

Reappraisal

Several years ago, the United States began an intensive reappraisal of its fundamental requirements for naval forces. It is still underway. Three principal questions are being addressed: the specific roles that naval forces should play in peacetime as well as wartime, the forces most appropriate for those roles -- in terms of both the characteristics of individual ship (and aircraft) types and of the number of each type that should be included in the force -- and the optimal geographical disposition and mode of deployment of this force.* Two additional questions are involved in this reappraisal. One concerns the threat posed to existing U.S. naval forces by the forces of potential opponents -- especially the Soviet Union -- and the impact of that threat on the ability of U.S. naval forces to accomplish their assigned tasks.[19] The second question concerns the ability of the United States to design and construct a different navy, one that will be not only less vulnerable to, but more effective in the face of, that opposition.

There are few, if any, obvious answers to these questions (if there were, this reappraisal would have been completed in short order). And it is difficult to believe that the more fundamen-

*The balance between the forces maintained in the Atlantic and those maintained in the Pacific; the balance between forces continuously deployed forward and those kept at the ready in home waters for deployment in specific contingencies.

tal issues involved will be resolved satisfactorily in the near term. The eventual outcome of this process is bound to be influenced heavily not only by estimates of present and future threats and the forces best suited to countering them, but also by the specific strategies considered most appropriate for the employment of those forces. As a result, it is difficult to predict what that outcome will be.

On the other hand, it is not difficult to identify the two issues that will go furthest in determining the eventual shape of the U.S. Navy. One concerns the continuing utility of the aircraft carrier, the other concerns the criteria by which decisions about the future naval force structure are made -- in particular, the extent to which the immediate, theater-specific requirements of one particular scenario, a full-scale conventional war in Europe, are to govern the selection of optimal unit capabilities and a mix of forces for the Navy as a whole, including that portion of the Navy intended for use in other theaters like the Pacific.[20]

The resolution of these issues will have little immediate impact on the shape of the Navy, and by extension the Pacific Fleet. Fundamental modification of the force structure can take

place only in the long run, and the U.S. Navy of ten years hence necessarily will look very much like that of today.*

But modification of the force structure is not the only option theoretically available. Significant changes in the posture of the Navy -- modifications in the geographical disposition and mode of deployment of existing forces -- could be effected in a comparatively brief period. Many factors argue against such changes. Not the least of these is the concern noted above that alteration of long established patterns of operation might be perceived not as what it would be (a revision of means) but as what it would not be (a revision of ends). Like the earlier reduction in overall naval strength, however, such modifications might prove unavoidable in the end. And there are good reasons, most military but some political, for making those changes.[21]

Wartime Employment

It can be argued (although one shouldn't attempt to take the argument too far) that earlier, when the U.S. Navy was numerically stronger, when many of the tasks it might be called upon to perform were less demanding, and when the combat capabilities of potential opponents like the Soviet Navy were not what they are today, it could concentrate in any region forces adequate to accomplish those tasks, and sustain them there for an extended

*For instance, even if it were concluded that the aircraft carrier should be abandoned -- which is extremely unlikely -- that decision could not be implemented until alternative means of performing the carriers' current functions had been developed and those new forces had been acquired in adequate numbers.

period, without placing excessive strain on the entire system -- in particular, without necessitating the withdrawal of forces in significant numbers from one ocean to augment those in another. That clearly is not the case today (and has not been for some time).[22]

There are three regions of major concern to the United States in which employment of its military forces is readily conceivable. These are the European-North Atlantic region, the Middle East, and the Asian-Pacific region. The United States maintains significant military forces in the first and last of these regions, but very little in the middle. The threats posed in each, and the forces immediately available to deal with them, are, however, not necessarily in balance.

The military threat in the European-North Atlantic region is clearly the most intense. The availability of forces to deal with threats in the Middle East is clearly the most problematic. Should one or another of these threats materialize, the United States will have to concentrate forces in the appropriate place that are adequate to deal with the problem. Given the situation outlined above, that probably will require shifting forces in significant numbers from one region to another.

Precisely what forces might be transferred from where to where would, of course, depend on what was going on in the region to which they might be sent. But it would also depend on what was considered likely to occur in the region from which they might be

withdrawn -- especially, what might occur if those forces were withdrawn that probably would not occur if they remained, the sequence in which those events might take place, and the amount of time likely to be available to cope with them.

The Pacific Fleet is often viewed as the prime source of augmenting forces for contingencies in other areas, especially a war in the European-North Atlantic region. In the absence of viable alternatives, it clearly is. If a European war did occur, it is not difficult to foresee one thing that might and one thing that would not happen. First, if necessary, forces undoubtedly would be withdrawn from the Pacific for use in the Atlantic. But, second, what was withdrawn undoubtedly would be determined by net requirements. Such transfers would not take place unless it seemed clear that they would solve a greater problem in the Atlantic than they created in the Pacific.

The Pacific Fleet is also a prime source of forces for operations in the Middle East. This is especially the case in situations where it is necessary to insure the continued flow of oil to the United States and its allies. Should that flow be threatened, forces undoubtedly would be moved from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean to protect it. But again, net requirements would prevail. The United States, for instance, has an obligation to assist Japan in defending itself. The defense of Japan, however, clearly now includes the defense of its oil supplies.[23] Where threatened, both must be protected; but this must be accomplished without

creating excessive imbalance between the forces protecting the nation itself and those protecting its lifelines. And the United States must act to protect the flow of oil to itself, as well as to meet its obligations to its allies. All of which reinforces the observation that in the end net requirements, rather than those specific to one or another conflict scenario, are most likely to determine what forces, if any, are redeployed in wartime.

That, in turn, raises another point. Naval forces can, and under certain circumstances undoubtedly would, be transferred from the Pacific to other regions. But this is not a one way street. Under other circumstances, should the net requirement there be greater, forces undoubtedly would be transferred from other regions to the Pacific. It is worth remembering that, twice now, this already has occurred.

Peacetime Deployment

The fact that the United States is on the one hand demonstrably willing and able to move forces when and where they are needed most in wartime, and is on the other hand extremely hesitant to modify the established pattern of forward deployment in peacetime, appears paradoxical. As indicated above, however, its reservations about modifying its peacetime deployments reflect real concerns, most of which are political in nature.[24]

One of these is the possibility that, should the Fleet's presence in the forward area be other than continuous, the local balance of power would be subject to temporary distortions, and potential opponents might find the temptations of adventurism irresistable. Another, and in many ways more compelling concern is that, unless U.S. forces were present to provide visible assurance, allies might begin to doubt the strength of the U.S. commitment to honor its obligations to them. Those are good reasons for retaining the present posture.

There are also good reasons for changing that posture -- making it easier to concentrate forces when and where they are needed most, not only in wartime but in peacetime as well. Most of these reasons are military in nature; some, however, are political.[25] The primary costs of maintaining the present posture have been noted above: reduction in the overall combat readiness of the force, reduction in surge capability for crisis-management operations. Reducing the requirement to maintain a substantial portion of the fleet deployed forward at all times would permit a larger proportion of the whole force to be deployed when contingencies arose, and should insure that the forces deployed in those situations were more fully combat ready. Exhancing combat readiness enhances deterrence; enhancing the strength of forces available for crisis-management operations does the same. Given the increasing naval and other military capabilities of the Soviet Union, and their demonstrated readiness to employ those capabili-

ties in pursuit of their overseas interests, such enhancement appears necessary.[26]

This brings up a second apparent paradox. Potential opponents -- including the Soviet Union -- recognize the fact that, when required, the United States has the willingness and capability to marshal formidable forces wherever required to counter their actions. This tends to make adventurism a potentially more costly and hence less attractive proposition for them.

Soviet behavior in the Indian Ocean, for example, has been remarkably restrained. Although they maintain naval forces in the region (roughly 18 units, somewhat less than half of which are combatants) that are on the average superior to those the United States maintains there (a command ship and two destroyers, augmented for brief periods several times each year by a carrier or cruiser battlegroup), they do very little with these forces. It can be argued (although, once again, one shouldn't attempt to take the argument too far) that a major reason for this Soviet restraint has been the likelihood that the United States would deploy forces into the region that could both deny them the achievement of adventuristic objectives there and in the process make them pay an excessive price for having tried. In short, it can be argued, to the extent that the Soviets have had adventuristic ambitions in the region they have been deterred from prosecuting them. However, to the extent that the potential U.S. reaction to their actions has an important influence on their behavior -- and

it is difficult to think of an external factor of greater potential importance to the Soviets -- it is the prospect of marshalling this commanding force, not the routine presence of those two destroyers, that exerts this inhibiting influence.

Paradoxically, it is not at all clear that allies have the same appreciation of the situation as potential opponents, that what most effectively deters one's enemies -- the ability to muster a superior force where and when it counts the most -- reassures one's friends. As a matter of fact, it is not at all clear precisely what does reassure allies.

Is it appearances? Or is it realities? Is it the continuous presence of the Sixth and Seventh Fleets in the vicinity, or the overall combat capabilities of the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets from which they are drawn? Surely the forces deployed forward can in any event render significant services; but, just as surely, given the increasing capabilities of potential opponents and the expanding scope of the threats that must be dealt with, should those threats actually materialize, it is the capabilities of the entire force that will in the end decide the issue.

If it is the case that what effectively deters potential opponents also adequately reassures allies, then the allies should say so. This would relieve U.S. apprehensions about revamping its peacetime deployments to increase the readiness of its forces for crisis-management and combat, in the process enhancing its ability

to assist its allies when that assistance is most needed -- in a "crunch." It could then feel free to treat its forces not as what they can never become -- ends in themselves -- but as what they can only be -- simply means, hopefully adequate, to do whatever most needs to be done, wherever it needs doing, in peacetime as well as in wartime.

If this is not the case, if more is required to reassure allies than to deter potential opponents, the allies should feel free to say so. This is one area where they can have a direct impact on what the United States does. Although liable to prove dysfuntional in the long run, continued compromise for immediate ends is possible. Only means are involved.

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